

TO THE HONORABLE, THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF PENNSYLVANIA:

The memorial of Elijah Dechert, of the borough of Reading, and the county of Berks, respectfully represents:

That he has great reason to complain of the report of the House Committee, appointed to examine into the facts connected with the over-issue of Relief bills by the Berks County Bank. Your memorialist would beg leave to represent:—that in the winter of the year 1841, he was importuned by many of the business men in this community to accept the Presidency of the Berks County Bank, which was then offered to him, and that he was led to believe that the institution was solvent, and could be made useful to the public: That influenced by these considerations he consented, and entered upon the duties of said office, fully believing, that though the Bank was then in an embarrassed condition, with prudence and energy all its difficulties could be overcome, and essential relief be extended to the business wants of the community: That at that time, the Bank of the United States was largely interested in the Berks County Bank, and before your memorialist consented to enter the latter institution, he called upon the President and Directors of said Bank of the United States, to ascertain whether they would, in order to protect their interests, aid him in restoring and sustaining the credit of the Berks County Bank, and obtained from them assurances that they would give all the aid in their power: That he then concluded that it would be necessary to raise the sum of \$30,000, at once, in order to redeem the circulation of the Bank, then \$70,000: That he called upon several of his friends, who agreed to unite with him in borrowing, upon their personal responsibility, the said sum of \$30,000, besides which, he and other friends agreed to incur other liabilities for the Bank: That they immediately raised \$15,000 upon their own notes, for \$10,000 of which, suits are now pending against your memorialist, and he also collected about \$5,000 from the debtors of the Bank, and with these sums the Bank was started about the 21st day of January, A. D., 1841. It was, however, found impossible to obtain more money in consequence of the difficulties in the monetary affairs of the country, and shortly after, the Bank of the United States failed, and no assistance could therefore be obtained from that quarter, and the expectations of your memorialist were all disappointed. Your memorialist would further represent: That he and those connected with him, entered into the Bank in good faith, and with the bona fide design of making said Bank useful to the public: That he purchased at once stock to the amount of \$900, and paid for it, and that from that time to this he devoted nearly the whole of his time to the promotion of the interests of the Bank, without having been paid either his salary or expenses, which he did not ask, because the Bank was not in a condition to pay them: That after he became President of said Bank, its credit was in a short time, to a great extent, restored, and its notes circulated freely throughout the State. Your memorialist would further represent: That after the passage of the act of Assembly of May 4, 1841, said Bank agreed to issue its proportion of Relief bills, and obtained the consent of Mr. Gilmore, the Treasurer, to pay them out at the counter, and answer the Treasurer's drafts in such funds as the holders would accept: That said Bank accepted the Relief Act in good faith, and so intended to carry it out: That they afterwards agreed to issue the second sum allotted by the Governor, and did issue it, but none of these bills were paid into the Treasury, but the whole sum was paid upon the Treasurer's orders. Your memorialist further represents: That when it was ascertained that after all the Banks of the Commonwealth had either accepted or refused, about one million and three hundred thousand dollars of the loan remained untaken, he received a letter from Gen. Simon Cameron, requesting an interview at Middletown, whither he went: That Gen. Cameron then stated that it was the opinion of the Governor and Attorney General, that one Bank might issue the whole amount of Relief bills which the other Banks had declined emitting, and proposed that the Berks County Bank should accept and issue the whole amount: That Gen. Cameron stated that many of the creditors of the Commonwealth along the lines of the public improvements, were in great distress, and their property under execution, and either then or afterwards urged also, that the election was approaching and that if the creditors were not paid, it would endanger Gov. Porter's election, and expressed his opinion that Gov. Porter would accept the offer of the Berks County Bank to issue said \$1,300,000. Your memorialist did not then decide either to accept or refuse, and Gen. Cameron promised to meet him in Reading: That some time afterwards Gen. Cameron did meet him in Reading, and again urged that the Bank should make the above mentioned issue, and stated that the Erie Bank had agreed to issue \$300,000; and the recollection of your memorialist is, that he also stated that Attorney General Johnson had given a written opinion in favor of the legality of an issue by one Bank, of the whole amount, and your memorialist either then or at some other time saw said opinion in manuscript, either in the hands of Gen. Cameron or some other person. Your memorialist deliberated until the 4th of September, 1841, when he sent a written offer by mail to the Governor, to issue \$700,000 of Relief bills, including the proportion allotted to the Bank under the second requisition, and a copy of said offer was preserved in the Bank. So far as your memorialist recollects, this was treated by the Governor precisely as were the first and second acceptances by the Bank, in all of which cases no answer was received by the Bank.

Your memorialist further states that, believing all was right, and that the said offer had been accepted by

the Governor, and that it would be carried into full effect, the Bank (under said arrangement with the Treasurer to pay these bills out at the counter, and account in other funds,) issued \$30,000 of said \$700,000 of relief bills, expecting and intending to pay the demand notes of said Bank, in place of said \$30,000 when drawn upon by the State Treasurer, and this out of \$700,000, was regarded as a small sum to be paid in demand notes. Your memorialist here solemnly declares, that not one cent of said issue was ever appropriated to his use, or the use of any person connected with the Bank. Your memorialist further states, that when he saw the opinion of Horace Binney, Esq., that one bank, after having issued its proportion of Relief bills under said act, could issue no more legally, and had reflected upon it, and when he found that the State Treasurer refused to draw for the notes so proposed to be issued, he determined to issue no more; and being apprehensive, as said offer was in the Governors' hands, that he might be called upon, and compelled to issue the whole \$700,000, he went to Harrisburg, called upon Governor Porter at the Executive Chamber, and obtained from him the said offer of Sept. 4, 1841, intending that the bank should, at the earliest day possible, redeem the said \$30,000. He is pained to find that that part of his testimony which related to the offer of Sept. 4, 1841, has been doubted by some of the Committee. He now repeats that testimony, and declares in the most solemn manner, that he did send said offer to Governor Porter, and that he afterwards received it back from him, probably six weeks or two months after it had been sent, and at a subsequent time finding it among his papers, out of regard to Governor Porter, and that it might not be known that it ever was in his hands, destroyed it, fully believing that the bank would be able to redeem said notes. Soon after this, the banks throughout the Commonwealth, encountered such difficulties as they had never before met. The Girard, and other banks in the city of Philadelphia, failed. The funds of the Berks County Bank were locked up in the Girard Bank and other places, and being compelled, unexpectedly, to redeem about \$40,000 of its demand notes, it yielded to the pressure of the times, and stopped payment. Then, while your memorialist was doing all in his power to collect funds to pay liabilities incurred for the Bank, and to redeem the said relief issues, the debtors of said Bank refused to pay any thing but its demand notes, which had very much depreciated, and thus the securities intended to meet said relief bills were wrested from him. That although he feels that in all he did in reference to said relief bills, he acted with honest intentions, and with no design either to benefit himself, or injure the Commonwealth, or others; and although he acted entirely as an officer of said Bank, he still feels extremely desirous that the holders of these notes should not be subjected to loss by their depreciation, or in any other way—a consequence which will be inevitable, if they are not redeemed by the Commonwealth, as they will then pass into the hands of speculators, to the great injury of the innocent holders. This, it appears to your memorialist, would be extremely unjust, because certainly a large proportion, and probably more than half of those now in circulation are authorized issues, and there is no mode of distinguishing the second and third emissions.

Influenced by this desire to have justice done to the holders of these notes, your memorialist hereby offers to transfer to the State Treasurer, for the benefit of the Commonwealth, the following securities:

Henry Monyer,	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$	85 00
Edward Jackson,	-	-	-	-	-	-		200 00
Thomas Jackson,	-	-	-	-	-	-		200 00
Jacob S. Ebling,	-	-	-	-	-	-		168 00
Benjamin Hain,	-	-	-	-	-	-		122 00
G. D. B. Keim, & D. H. Boas,	-	-	-	-	-	-		170 00
J. W. Seitzinger,	-	-	-	-	-	-		282 00
Levering & Craig,	-	-	-	-	-	-		224 00
James Cameron,	-	-	-	-	-	-		253 00
Bernard Flynn,	-	-	-	-	-	-		150 00
Daniel C. Guldin,	-	-	-	-	-	-		100 00
Peter Filbert, & L. Wharton,	-	-	-	-	-	-		600 00
Simon Cameron,	-	-	-	-	-	-		3,600 00
Benjamin Parke,	-	-	-	-	-	-		620 00
Daniel Larer,	-	-	-	-	-	-		398 00
Henry H. Mears.	-	-	-	-	-	-		200 00
Mortgage, Geo. D. B. Keim,	-	-	-	-	-	-		800 00
Henry Phelps, David Hill, and others,	-	-	-	-	-	-		250 00
H. H. Mears, & E. Birkenbine,	-	-	-	-	-	-		215 00
James O'Conner & Co.,	-	-	-	-	-	-		224 00
Joseph Henry,	-	-	-	-	-	-		120 00
James M. Porter.	-	-	-	-	-	-		12,200 00
O. Barrett & O. F. Johnson,	-	-	-	-	-	-		3,626 00
O. F. Johnson,	-	-	-	-	-	-		340 00
Claim vs. Commonwealth,	-	-	-	-	-	-		2,200 00
Relief Notes of 4th May, 1841,	-	-	-	-	-	-		278 00
								\$27,625 00
Certificate of State stock already handed to Treasurer,	-	-	-	-	-	-		1,675 00
Relief Notes redeemed and destroyed by Treasurer,	-	-	-	-	-	-		824 00
								\$30,124 00

On this condition, that the State shall redeem said Relief bills, and that said securities as they are collected, shall be converted into a five per cent. State stock, and the stock so purchased to be appropriated

at the par value thereof, to the payment and cancellation of the notes so redeemed by the Commonwealth, and he further offers to give his bond in a sufficient sum to pay, at the expiration of five years, any deficiency which may remain, after said securities have been exhausted.

He firmly believes that in this way, every difficulty will be removed, but if the bill now before the Legislature becomes a law, a great wrong and injury will be done to your memorialist—the holders of these notes subjected to heavy losses, and no one benefitted but speculators, who would ruin your memorialist, before he could collect the money due upon said securities. He therefore prays that his memorial may be favorably received, and an act be passed to enable his proposition to be carried into effect, and he will ever pray, &c.

ELIJAH DECHERT.

March 23, 1844.

